

Heaven Can Wait

The Chrysalis Recordings, Judie Tzuke (3CD Cherry Red)

I first heard Judie Tzuke because a bloke I worked and shared a house with in Coventry for a year had a girlfriend who was a doppelgänger of her. Because that boast (which happened to be true) didn't impress me, Steve made sure that I listened to his Judie Tzuke LP and was impressed. And I was.

What's interesting about the early Judie Tzuke LPs is just how rocky they are. Yes, in a big-hair, big-production way, but the alluring and sensual ballads are bookshelved with absolute rockers which feature some brilliant guitar work. The later live album, *Road Noise*, which is one of the three albums gathered together here, is clear evidence of her ability to rock-out, screech and wail, for all it's worth. In fact, I was at the Hammersmith Odeon gig which some of the album was recorded at, and still own the double vinyl album.

The other two albums, *Shoot the Moon* and *Ritmo*, are studio outings (her fourth and fifth) and show why Tzuke was never able to capitalise on her early success. They're somewhat overproduced and bland, and have lost any edge that the first three studio outings had. Yes, *Shoot the Moon* has 'Now There Is No Love At All', which purports to be a badass rock song, but mostly it's overloud rhythm guitar, tub-thumping drums, and multitracked shouting. Some of the ballads are better, especially when the synthesizers fade into the distance and Tzuke's voice is highlighted, but the rhythms, especially the drums, are on auto-plod throughout.

Ritmo shares production qualities and ideas, and has even less redeeming qualities. It's *Road Noise* that anyone will buy this budget set for, and it's worth every penny to hear Tzuke's glorious vocals and her band let rip, as each song rises from well-deserved, tumultuous applause. Highlights include 'You Are the Phoenix'. 'Sportscar' [sic.] and 'The Hunter' if rock is your thing, or if you prefer seduction and something softer then take your pick from 'Come Hell or Water High', 'Bring the Rain' or the obligatory (but very wonderful) 'Stay With Me Till Dawn'.

For the real highlights of Judie Tzuke's career you need to seek out the *Welcome to the Cruise*, *Sports Car* and *I Am the Phoenix* albums. In the meantime, enjoy this reissue and some of her more recent self-released and self-produced albums, which I highly recommend. Judie Tzuke is touring in 2020 too: details are also to be found on her website, www.tzuke.com

Rupert Loydell